

Message Text

SECRET

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44

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 151309Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 612

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 1864

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SY, LE, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI VIEW OF LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS

REFC STATE 062096

SUMMARY: AS OF FORENOON MARCH 15 ISRAELIS CONSIDER LEBANESE SITUATION ABOUT AS MUDDLED AS ONE COULD FIND. FRANGIE WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO RESIGN IF THERE IS TO BE ANY SORT OF STABILIZATION. FOR THE TIME BEING THE GOI IS MAINTAINING ITS LOW BUT WATCHFUL POSTURE. ENDSUMMARY.

1. IN AMBASSADOR'S ABSENCE IN EILAT, DCM SAW MFA SECRETARY GENERAL AVRAHAM KIDRON MORNING OF MARCH 15. TELEGRAMS FROM BEIRUT, PARTICULARLY 2291, 2292 AND 2294, WERE HELPFUL IN GIVING THE ISRAELIS AN ON-THE SPOT APPRECIATION OF THE SITUATION TO COMPLETE INFORMATION ALREADY AVAILABLE TO THEM, DCM SUPPLEMENTED THESE WITH THE POINTS MADE IN PARA 2 OF STATE 062096.

2. AFTER LISTENING TO EHSE LATTER POINTS, KIDRON SAID HE HAD NOTED OUR "EXPECTATION" THAT THERE WOULD BE NO ISRAELI MILITARY ACTION WITHOUT PRIOR HDISCUSSION WITH US. WHILE NOT COMMENTING HIMSELF, HE SAID THAT HE WOULD PASS THAT INFORMATION TO HIGHER LEVEL, I.E., FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON.

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3. IN REGARD TO THE SITUATION IN LEBANON ITSELF, KIDRON SAID

THAT FROM INFORMATION THEY HAD IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE SITUATION WAS ALMOST THE MOST MUDDLED WHICH COULD BE IMAGINED. THE ONLY INFORMATION THEY HAD WHICH DID NOT SQUARE WITH WHAT WE HAD PASSED THEM WAS THAT STRONGEST CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENCY, IF FRANGIE STEPS DOWN, WERE RAYMOND EDDE (FOR LEFT) AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN (FOR RIGHT), NOT ELIAS SARKIS. KIDRON SAID THAT HE WAS, IN FACT, NOT AWARE OF SARKIS'S INDENTITY. AT THIS POINT HE WAS INTERRUPTED BY MOSHE RAVIV, DIRECTOR OF NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS, WHO POINTED OUT THAT SARKIS HAD BEEN MENTIONED AS A STRONG POSSIBILITY ON RADIO BORADCAST YESTERDY.

4. THERE WAS MUCH POSTURING IN WHAT WAS GOING ON, IN KIDRON'S VIEW. FOR INSTANCE, LT. KHATIB'S "MARCH ON BEIRUT" WAS REMINISCENT OF MUSSOLINI'S MARCH ON ROME IN 1923, BUT KHATIB'S THREAT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN CALLED OFF BY JUMBLATT AND THE SYRIANS.

5. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT IT SEEMED THAT THE LEBANESE POLITICANS WERE SLOWLY BEGINNING TO WRITE OFF FRANGIE. KIDRON HIMSELF HAD REACHED THE CONCLUSION THAT THE ONLY WAY TO BEGIN TO BRING SOME SORT OF STABILIZATION TO THE SITUATION WOULD BE FOR FRANGIE TO RESIGN. IT WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT MOST OF THE MUSLIMS WOULDSTILL FAVOR SOME OTHER CHRISTIAN PRESIDENT. HOWEVER, HE WAS INCLINED TO AGREE WITH EMBASSY BEIRUT THAT FRANGI'S STEPPING DOWN WOULD HAVE TO BE OF A VOLUNTARY NATURE, AND WAS SKEPTICAL OF GENERAL AHDAB'S ABILITY OF WILLINGNESS TO USE MILITARY POWER TO FORCE FRANGIE OUT. HE ADDED, PARENTHETICALLY, THAT THE ISRAELI KNOW THAT AHDAB IS A SOLID SOLDIER WITH A GOOD RECORD.

6. KIRDON AGREED THAT SYRIAN INTENTIONS ARE VERY IMPORTANT, IF NOT THE KEY, AND INDICATED THAT THE GOI WOLD BE PLEASED TO HAVE ANYTYIVNG WE COULD GIVE THEM IN THAT REGARD. ISRAELI INTELLIGNCE SHOWED THAT SAIQA FORCES UNDER SYRIAN CONTROL HAD NOW MOVED INTO SOUTH LEBANON, BUT THEY WERE NOT QUITE CERTAIN WHAT THIS PORTENDED.

7. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, KIDRON SAID THAT YESTERDAY'S
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CABINET HAD NOT DISCUSSED THE LEBANESE SITUATION ALTHOUGH IT HAD HEARD A MILITARY APPRECIATION BY GENERAL GAZIT, DIRECTOR OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE.

8. KIDRON CONCLUDED THAT FOR THE TIME BEING THE ISRAELIS WOULD MAINTAIN A LOW BUT WATCHFUL POSTURE AS THEY HAVE DONE SINCE THE EVENTS IN JANUARY. THEY HAD NOT TAKEN ANY SPECIAL MEAURES ON THE BORDER RELATED TO CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS:

"OF COURSE, LEBANON IS NOT A CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNTRY,
BUT A NEIGHBOR," AND THEY HAVE TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT
WHAT GOES ON THERE.

9. COMMENT: KIDRON DID NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF UNDUE
ISRAELI CONCERN WITH THE SITUATION IN LEBANON BUT HE ALSO
DID NOT SEEM PARTICULARLY AU COURANT WITH MILITARY MOVES;
THE EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO BE IN TOUCH WITH IDF IN THIS
REGARD. HOPE IT WILL BE POSSIBLE PROVIDE GOI WITH ANY
REACTION AMBASSADOR MURPHY IS ABLE TO OBTAIN FROM PRESIDENT
ASAD, AS SYRIAN POSITIONS AND INTENTIONS WILL CONTINUE TO
BE VERY IMPORTANT FACTORS GOVERNING ISRAELI ATTITUDES AND
ACTIONS.
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